



Sociology of eating out – fitness diets in Helsinki restaurant scene

Tiia Puhakka

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| Author Tiia Puhakka | |
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| <p>This thesis aims to find out why there aren't any restaurants in Finland designed for people eating according to fitness diets. There are some restaurants advertising themselves as healthy restaurants but they are still not the same as fitness restaurants that can be seen for example in America. In this thesis the subject will be studied from a sociological point of view because in fitness scene people mostly live around and with people in that scene. Question is, does this affect people's choices when they choose a restaurant and how do they feel about eating out.</p> <p>This thesis concentrates on Helsinki area because Finland is a small country and this is where the biggest demand and possible target group is to be found. The problem will be studied from a fitness lifestyle perspective because their diets are very strict and also their raw materials are carefully selected which means their options are more limited in food products and also amounts.</p> <p>Qualitative approach was chosen since it suited well for and in depth interviews and since the aim is to know where the problem lies from the restaurant industry perspective. There also isn't any answers to why there isn't these kinds of restaurants.</p> <p>In the theoretical part I go through the historical facts of eating out in Finland and in Helsinki, the social side of eating out and future trends in this sector. The words and terminology used is also defined. The empirical part includes the analysis of the methods used, the objective, the interviews and a summary. Theme interviews were conducted with the professionals of both industries on March, April and May 2016. The interview questions were not included because everybody had mostly different questions depending on their status and field. All the interviews were transcribed and analysed in the empirical part.</p> <p>In the discussion part the conflict between the previous thesis and the interview results are discussed. The interviewees mostly didn't agree that this kind of restaurant would be needed nor that it would last. They felt that the demand wouldn't be big enough and that the costs would be too much. Many said that this could work but only if it would be combined with another concept. Also what was strongly present in the interviews was that the social factor is key in the restaurant experiences and this is something worth studying for as an individual subject. Either from Finland perspective or maybe comparing Finnish and other nationalities social aspects of eating out.</p> | |
| Keywords Fitness, restaurants, diet, sociology, Helsinki, eating out. | |

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1 Introduction

In 2015 spring I was watching a television show called Fitness diaries. In one episode one of the fitness athletes seen on the show, Mari Valosaari, was sitting in her car eating her own food while her friends were inside of a restaurant enjoying a nice dinner. I wondered how does it feel when you can't enjoy a nice meal with friends?

The social aspects of eating out is a rather new target for sociology studies. The social aspect of eating out hasn't been studied that much (Rappoport 2003, 131). This made this topic even more interesting. Most of the books have a quite wide perspective on social aspect of restaurants in general which made my research a bit challenging.

This subject is the key point of my thesis. It is simple to say let's go out for dinner when you don't have any restrictions on your diet. Especially in Finland, eating out whether you have allergies or special diets, is rather easy, except if you are an athlete and you are under a specific diet. It amazes me how it is possible that in the land of lactose intolerants, gluten free and celiac disease and don't forget all the allergies, and the new up-coming irritable bowel syndrome, we don't have options for people who want to count their macros. Counting macros means: "The number of grams of protein, carbohydrates, and fats you consume on a particular day." (Lee 24 February 2016).

The social aspect came in to the picture when I started thinking the life of a fitness professional. When you are competing in a professional level your life revolves around that sport usually. In fitness diets, as will be mentioned in the theory part, the diet is a key factor. Especially during competition season it is near to impossible for many people to go out to eat and enjoy food because it is not suited for their diet. This is why I am amazed that the fitness restaurants aren't a big thing here especially when wellbeing is a growing trend and the fact that fitness has been in the media for few years.

This topic was chosen because I am interested in fitness lifestyle as well as nutrition and I am interested in the sociological side of why people go out to eat from my professional perspective. According to a business plan for a fitness restaurant thesis made by Ikonen and Kämppe (2014, 54) there is a demand but still no one to supply. Also my interest towards this subject sprung from the growing variety in restaurant concepts, wellness and health trends as well as my personal hobby of going to the gym.

I started planning my thesis while knowing it is going to be a tight schedule because I started on January and was aiming to graduate this spring but I knew also that it is possible. I started with the research and continued with the interviews. I had one problem with my last interviewee. I took 1,5 months to find her and that took away a lot of valuable time. But I did the best with the situation. After that I analysed the results and was able to move forward with the empirical part.

The objectives of this thesis are to find out would a fitness restaurant work in Helsinki restaurant scene, how important is the social aspect while eating out and does the fitness lifestyle effect on when and where these people go out to eat. The respondents from the restaurant side were interviewed to get support for the theory part and for my own opinions as well and to see do these people from two different industry see eye to eye on this matter.

The theory part deals with what is sociology, what is eating out, the history of eating out in general and in Finland and what is the current situation in the Finnish restaurant field. In the theory part I also go through what is fitness, what is a fitness diet and what kind of fitness restaurants can be found in the world. The empirical part explains the research methods used, analyses them and goes through the interviews, the results and summarizes the results at the end.

I chose qualitative research method because I wanted my interviews to be theme interviews. I wanted to bring out personal opinions and feelings concerning these subjects. These opinions were mostly based on experience and knowledge about their industries. I conducted my interviews on March, April and May of 2016.

The discussion part is an overview of the whole project, analyses the choices made concerning this thesis and goes through my personal learning throughout this process. I also discuss the result found in the interviews and does my study have any applicability in our industry.

According to my interviewees this type of restaurant could work along with another concept but alone no. What I failed to see in the beginning of this process were the business side factors of establishing a restaurant. I wasn't looking at this question objectively but through my own feelings and opinions. As I went along with my interviews it was actually funny how blind I was to think that of course this would work. There are so many factors that need to be considered when establishing a restaurant. The concept needs to be solid as my interviewees mentioned and especially in a small country like Finland the demand

isn't that big even when talking about Helsinki. There is the biggest population density but still that doesn't mean everybody would go to the same restaurants. One of my interviewees mentioned that yes our industry is going towards more niche concepts but still this would be too niche.

With the respondents from the restaurant side we discussed about the fact that wellness trends are growing and many of them felt that the social aspect in dining out is the most important part exactly because mental health is part of wellbeing. What was also discussed in the interviews was the fact that competition is hard nowadays, which is why the restaurants need to differentiate themselves in order for people to notice. Many restaurants are putting more effort on simple ideas.

There could be a market for a fitness restaurants and as stated by my respondents it would need another concept for it to work. 4 out of 5 respondents from my fitness groups said they would go to a restaurant like this and this result complements what was already seen in the thesis by Ikonen and Kämppi (2014).

The social side is the most important thing when people go out to eat and apparently it doesn't matter if you are a hard working restaurant professional or a fitness athlete. We all have the need to spend time with the people that are close to us and this only proves that we are a people industry and it's the people who still make the experience at the end.

2 Sociology of eating out

These following chapters will go through what is sociology and how it can be seen in dining out experiences and also what is eating out and how are these two linked together. The most important factors of the history of eating out are discussed as well as the Finnish history of eating out and restaurant culture to give the reader an overview of how restaurants an eating out became to be. These chapters will go through also the future trends in the restaurant field.

2.1 Sociology

The sociological aspect is part of this thesis because one the objectives is to find out do fitness people go out to eat, why and which restaurants? The goal is to see does their social relations have any effect on their choices concerning eating out.

Sociology is “the science of society, social institutions, and social relationships; specifically : the systematic study of the development, structure, interaction, and collective behavior of organized groups of human beings.” (Merriam-Webster 2016a).

Sociology studies the social aspect of human life. The societal and social factors that affect our everyday lives, from cultural, individual identity and socialization point of view (Beardsworth & Keil 1997, 54).

Socialization means that a person must learn the skills, beliefs and rules in order to work in harmony with the society (Laine & Vilkkio-Riihelä 2013, 20).

Sociology studies everyday life from social point of view in order to see how social relations affect different aspects of life and what do these relations mean. In dining out experience the emphasis is on the social relations and showing ones' identity. (Finkelstein 1989). The social aspect is important part of the experience and when choosing the milieu person can show his or hers social status.

There was a study conducted in 2000-2002 and in 2007 that wealthier people eat healthier and exercise more. According to this study persons wealth and profession have an effect on peoples' health. (Loman 2015.)

This gives an idea that eating according to a healthier diet is because a person has money. This might also be because when you don't have to stress about money it's easier

to concentrate on other things and interests. Social pressure might also effect on how people choose to eat. People who spend a lot of time together often have a similar life-style. Not only concerning money but hobbies and eating habits also.

Food is also a big part of persons' identity. It gives the person the sense of belonging and persona. It can also make him or her different from others. Nowadays it is important for people to express themselves in different ways. Food is a good way to show how am I? Which restaurants a person chooses to be seen at for example. Vegetarians are mostly seen as people how are mostly doing it because of animal rights or other ethical reasons. Fitness diet is a part of the sport but also a way of showing who you are and that being healthy is at the top of the list. People can choose the restaurant according to where they want to be seen and which place goes together with their values and persona. (Henderson, 2015; Martens & Warde, 1989, 74.)

People also like to label things (Haltiwanger, 2014). Why is somebody behaving in a certain way or eating in a different way. Here in Finland we have a reputation of consuming alcohol quite a lot and if you don't drink it's usually questioned, why don't you? There must be something wrong in a person who doesn't drink. Social pressure can also effect on how people choose between things. In many cases social pressure is related to something uncomfortable or when somebody is about to do wrong. Social pressure can be seen in the smallest of choices also. For example when choosing a restaurant which one do you prefer, McDonalds or Savoy? McDonalds is cheap but the quality of food isn't nearly as good as in Savoy, which on the other hand is more expensive. (Dobrin, 2014).

Social pressure can also have an effect on the other direction if a person chooses to surround themselves with people that are making good choices from individuals' perspective. Then the social pressure becomes a positive thing.

2.2 Eating out

The definition of eating out is quite wide. According to Cambridge Dictionaries online it means: eat out in a restaurant. Wood again observes that the definition is hard to make because eating out means cafes and lunch places which mainly operate on take away basis so the food can be consumed at home (not out), or that dining out can be an ancillary function instead of being the main purpose. For example in a shopping mall the eating is usually secondary activity when again going for a romantic dinner, the dinner is the primary. (Beardsworth & Keil 1997; Cambridge Dictionaries 2016.)

Eating has always been a social event. Whether it was with ones' family or with business partners or sometimes even between enemies. In the dinner table there has been conversations about family lives, business plans or making peace. People have always gathered around good food and beverage and they still are. Before the modern times, food served outside of your home wasn't about making business but about social obligation and hospitality (Beardsworth & Keil 1997, 101). People also associate food with different celebrations and intimate gatherings for example weddings. Many people go out to dinner while dating and food is an important part of weddings because it is a way of showing the couples cultures and their personalities. (Rappoport 2003, 163.)

Before restaurants the first public places for eating outside of your home were cafes' in the 17th century and they were established in the cities. These places became popular because there was no social class division. (Beardsworth & Keil 1997, 105.)

Restaurants became to be when people started traveling. First the restaurants where attached to inn's where people could spend the night during their trips. When travelling and living somewhere else than with your family, became more and more common, the commercial restaurants were born. The progress was very slow especially in Europe. (Beardsworth & Keil 1997, 104.) The technological developments in transport made travelling easier and cheaper as cities grew and people weren't reliable for their families or relatives to provide shelter.

In the early 18th century regional cuisines developed and this was possible with improved storage technology, demand, and social stability. Because of these developments eating became more than just a survival factor for many people. (Rappoport 2003, 150.) In the later part of the century, social climbing was possible if a person knew good eating habits and good manners according to Norbert (Rappoport 2003, 153).

As stated by Driver people wanted to have traditional cuisines when travelling but this had nothing to do with interest toward other cultures but because ethnic food was most of the time cheaper than mainstream kitchen (Beardsworth & Keil 1997, 108).

In the 19th century along with industrial revolution, different cuisines became available because of developed transportation and food preservation systems. Food started to have social and emotional effect on people. Thanks to Anthelme Brillat-Savarin the food itself became the reason for celebration and the main topic at dinner table. People were appreciated more according to how well they knew different cuisines and wine and also how

they brought out their character throughout dinner. (Rappoport 2003, 152-153.) From there on food started to be a symbol for culture and values in different societies. (Rappoport 2003, 154).

Taverns and such were not that flexible with their opening hours and that is why street food and diners came to be. In the early 20th century there was a rapid growth in the restaurant scene. Catering, chains and franchising were introduced and they grew rapidly. Eating out for pleasure in ones' free time became more popular and the concept of drive-ins' was invented in the 1920's. Farb and Armelagos stated that eating patterns were becoming more about making a cultural and social statement rather than based on class, religious or ethnic choices. (Beardsworth & Keil 1997, 111.)

In the 1920's during prohibition law in the United States of America the high status French restaurants suffered because they used wine for the cooking and also because the selling of alcohol made most of the sales. The prohibition contributed to the change that lunch places, cafes and tearooms were serving low cost food for the workers. Women started to go to these places and their dieting preferences for salads and lighter products, changed what was offered in the menus. (Levenstein 1988.)

After the recession in the 90's, people started to spend more money on eating out. People with higher incomes and who lived in the cities, used more money on eating out. With the growth of income people have had more money to spend on eating out. Shopping malls started to created food courts to increase variety in supply. (Beardsworth & Keil 1997, 116.)

Future trends in restaurant scene are wellbeing and health. Riku Rantala said that future trends will be that different foods will be wide spread, healthy, local and that they will be about sharing, experience, individuality and freedom of choice. (Tuominen 2015). According to one of the interviewees': people are becoming more and more aware of what suites them personally which means that knowledge grows and people continue pursuing personal best in diets.

Social aspects of eating out is a subject that hasn't been studied much, yet. It seems that it is too obvious for sociological studies. Eating out as stated earlier, is hard to define but still people acknowledge what is included under this heading. Eating out has an important role in peoples' minds and everyday life. Many important moments are experienced over dinner table and the social side is one of the key elements in these moments.

2.2.1 The history of eating out in Helsinki and in Finland

The development of Finnish gastronomy culture follows the similar patterns as discussed in the previous chapter but as you can notice the timing is a little bit different. It has always been that new things and trends come here a bit later and it is interesting to see how this has also changed because of globalization and internet.

After Helsinki became the capital of Finland in the 1812 the city started to grow and become the centre of culture, population and economy. This made it possible for Helsinki to develop and modernise itself. (Ruokatieto 2016a.)

The developments in the 19th century Helsinki made possible for the restaurant scene to grow. New cafes and spas' were established and with students, public servants and travellers the scene grew quite rapidly and became popular. When wealth grew and new railway connection to Russia were built, the restaurant culture was given new possibilities. People had more money to spend on their leisure time. Because of long distances between home and work, lunch had to be eaten outside of home. (Ruokatieto 2016a.)

During this time most of the restaurant workers came from abroad and brought new influences with them. The food that was served was extravagant and women could only visit restaurants in male company. In the 1880's cafes were established where women from upper class could visit without male company. Also the closing hours were categorized according to clienteles' social class. (Ruokatieto 2016a & Sillanpää 1991, 8.)

In the late 19th and the early 20th century the temperance movement was starting to grow strong. After the civil war people were more divided than ever and not long after, the prohibition became a reality. The prohibition didn't affect that much in Finland. People were selling alcohol under the counter and "hard tea" was offered. The only thing were it did affect was the fact that the Finnish restaurant scenery became more Finnish. Employees from abroad didn't want to come in to a country which was so absolute in their alcohol policy. Before the Second World War the division of people after the civil war was still to be seen. People started to move towards south into the big cities like Helsinki. It became more national instead of the previous international. There was disharmony between the Finnish speaking and Swedish speaking public but also in the division of food items. The vegetables for examples were mostly seen in rich folks' tables. When the war came the food was rationed so the restaurant scene development stopped for that time. (Ruokatieto 2016a, Sillanpää 1991, 10, 12.)

After the war income grew slowly and people really started migrating to the cities from the countryside. Cities became more international and new ideas and innovations were brought to the markets. Chains and different limited liability companies started establishing restaurants and different chains ruled Finnish restaurant industry for many decades. (Ruokatieto 2016b.)

In the 50's and 60's the restructuring in Finland changed the food culture radically. The different eating habits were mixed with people moving from north to south and the variety of raw materials grew as the transportation of goods (import) became easier and faster. (Löyttyniemi 2013.)

Bars and pubs were introduced to the people especially after 1969 when it was allowed to sell beer in grocery stores and in restaurants. People from different parts of society found their place from wider range of restaurants. (Ruokatieto 2016b, Sillanpää 1991, 94.)

In the 1970's the consumption of fruits and low fat milk products grew (Löyttyniemi 2013). The most popular starters in restaurants were egg dishes, fish and children's menus' were born. Fine dining culture was established strong when Palace Gourmet got the first Michelin star in Finland in 1987. (Ruokatieto 2016b.)

Throughout the 21st century chefs' have started to take the menus back to our roots. Northern culinary culture has become more and more popular during the last decade. (Ruokatieto 2016b.) People have started to be more aware of the health aspects of food and trends relating to food. Consumers are interested that food is healthy and the origin of raw materials because they feel it affects directly to the flavour. People are nowadays also more aware of the ethics and lifestyle choices related to food and choose to live and eat according to a certain lifestyle, which sometimes include special diets. (Löyttyniemi 2013.)

2.2.2 The current situation of people eating out in Helsinki

Many Finnish people associate food with family gatherings and celebrations. The social aspect while eating out, is still important. People go out to eat in the metropolitan area much more, just for fun, as they do outside of metropolitan area. According to Varjonen (2012) 40% of all restaurant meals was work related. Also in these cases the quality of food was important.

People are eating out more than ever. Snacks and or breakfast is consumed more outside of home to save time. Leisure time and holidays usually include a lot of eating out. Singles

and people without children and people who live alone usually eat out more often than others. (Varjonen 2012.)

People are now looking value for money. They expect more for less. This is interesting in a sense that people want variety and individual options but the work is mostly still the same. Year 2015 wasn't bad for metropolitan areas' restaurants. About 70 new restaurants were opened and many of them are quite small and simplicity is the key (Karjalainen 2016). Simplicity and the fact that people want individual options might be a good way to meet these challenges.

The reasons why people choose to go to a restaurant usually are the quality of food and service, value for money and the atmosphere. People usually listen to recommendations from their family and friends. (Lintunen 2014.) We eat mostly the things that are identified or recommended to be good to eat, by our social circle (Rappoport 2003, 142-143). This is also related to the social pressure that people experience. It can be either a positive thing or a negative thing. This is why forums like Tripadvisor, Yelp, eat.fi and Nyt-liite play a big role nowadays in determining hospitality companies' reputation. Nowadays thanks to internet the social circle can be the whole world but people mostly trust locals who are active with their reviews. Also of course friends and family too. What people recommend has also changed because of eating habits and different food trends. Before there was a limited selection of places and nowadays new restaurants are opened everyday.

3 What is fitness

These next chapters will go through what is fitness, what is a fitness diet, how the diets work, how people eat and what kind of fitness restaurants there are around the globe. The word fitness in itself means “quality or stage of being fit” (Merriam-Webster 2016b).

Fitness and bodybuilding are physical sports that have many individual sports going under these two headings. “The IFBB holds competition at the World Championships level for Juniors, Seniors and Masters in Men’s Bodybuilding and Classic Bodybuilding, Men’s and Women’s Physique, Men’s and Woman’s Fitness as well as Women’s Bodyfitness and Bi-kini Fitness” (IFBB 2016). In all of these sports the criteria’s are different depending on which one we are talking about. This thesis doesn’t go into detail about the sports themselves because this is concentrating more on the food rather than the sport.

The federation of international fitness and bodybuilding was established in 1964 by two Canadian brothers Joe and Ben Weider who made bodybuilding as known as it is today. There is 191 member countries in IFBB and it has the largest amount of members out of all sport organizations. (IFBB Finland 2016.)

Fitness boom has been all over media in Finland since 2012. Jutta Gustafsberg with Jari Mentula are one of the key characters of bringing this sport to the masses. Fitfarm was born accidentally as Jutta herself has stated while she was following her passion. Fitfarm grew really fast in a matter of few years and today it is one the most known fitness company in Finland, offering personal trainer services and different online training programs for a good price. (Ilona 2016; Fitfarm 2016.)

People are slowly adapting themselves to these new trends which usually don’t last long. Fitness boom has proven to be different in a way that people are treating it as a lifestyle choice rather than as a passing trend. After the fitness boom started the amount of gym memberships and personal trainers has grown and there has been more competitors in fitness sports also. (Rautio 2013.)

Cultural anthropologist Taina Kinnunen has made her dissertation about bodybuilding in 2001 and in her interview for YleX she stated how surprised she was when she realized how strongly this boom came to be. She also said that 10 years ago all the women who went to the gym were competitors but now fitness is more of a lifestyle choice. People don’t see the sport as freak show anymore but as something to look up to and pursue. (Rautio 2013.)

3.1 Diets and counting macros

The key factor in fitness sports and sports in general, is the diet. The diet is the key when talking about goal oriented training because especially in these sports the idea is to mold your body in to the extreme. Counting the right amount of macros which means proteins, carbohydrates, fats and all other nutrients, is the key to optimize the muscle growth and burning fat. The final product what you see on the stage is the result of strict diet and hard work.

The time for competitors goes from off season to competing preparation season which includes the diet. During off season the calories are put above the daily expenditure to increase muscle growth and during diet the key is to minimize proteins and have higher carbohydrate intake, in relation to proteins, so that a persons' body gets enough glycogen for the muscle cells. Muscles grow with glycogen and the proteins repair the damage made to the muscles and helps the muscle cells' to regenerate which makes them grow. This way the muscles get enough building blocks and the recovery after work out is better. It's very specific which kind of diet suits for different people. That's why there isn't that much diet examples online because people have different bodies which means different needs. (El-oranta 6 January 2015; Terve urheilija 2016; Ravintokirja 2008.)

As mentioned earlier people competing and eating according to these diets have individual meal plans and that is because bodies are different. There are some universal food stuff that many people use due to their rich nutritional values and quality and they are presented in table 1. The food is clean and by clean meaning unprocessed. They also use as basic raw materials as possible doing everything themselves for example seasoning the food. Everything is weighted and the word mealprep is used widely meaning that people weight, cook and pack their food ready to save time and to avoid spending too much time in the kitchen. The food is as rich as possible in nutrients and the amount of salt and fat is also measured to ensure that there is enough of them and not too much as usually there is, in processed food.

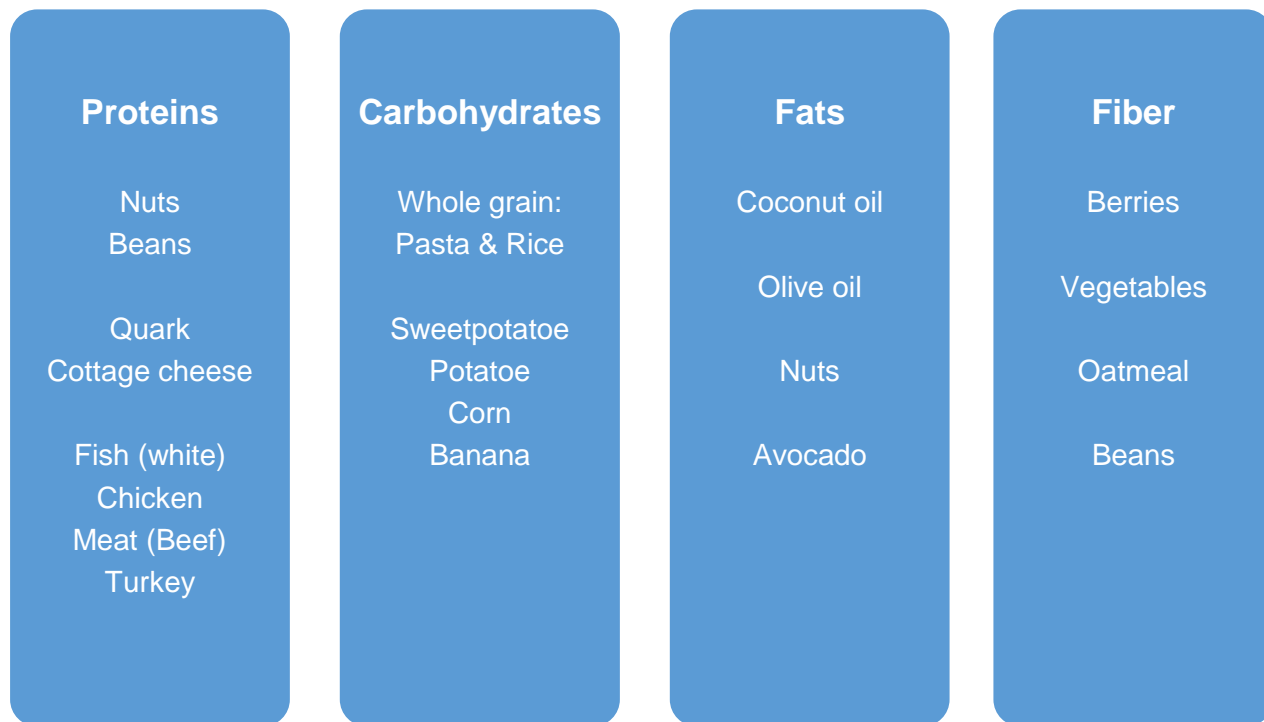


Figure 1. Food items high on different nutritional values (Barrie, 2016; Denny 2016; Fineli 2016; Palmer 2008, 28; Whitbread 2016.)

All food items stated in figure 1 can be seen in figure 2 in which are examples of different kinds of food item options that can be used in a fitness diet. All the food items in figure 1 have been checked in Fineli web pages which shows the nutritional value of the chosen food items. Because of Fitfarm diets are under copyright I wasn't allowed to attach example diets to the Theseus version. Instead the figure 2 will give you an example of what could be included in a fitness diet.

In figure 2 you can see an example of a diet plan. As shown in the figure the amount of proteins relation to carbohydrates is bigger and also the amount of vegetables is usually around 500g per day. From berries and vegetables the body gets a lot of fiber which keeps the hungry feeling away longer. (Terve.fi 2016.) This is also a nice versatile diet which gives the body a good variations of different nutrients.

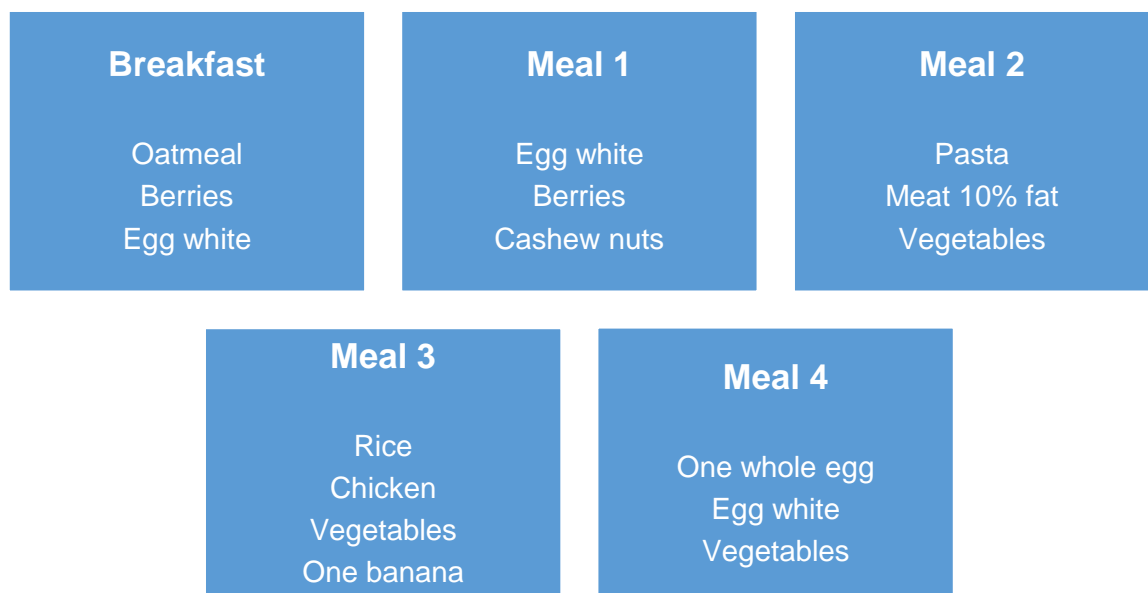


Figure 2. An example of a fitness diet (Not official diet plan)

3.2 Fitness restaurants around the world

In America there are many different kinds of restaurants that serve good food which is suitable for fitness lifestyles. For example in America one can find Muscle maker grill, Protein House, The Firehouse and Rocbody Fitness Café. In Europe there are Slims Health Kitchen in Ireland and Gym's Kitchen in England. (Martin 2014; Muscle maker grill 2016; Roc body fitness café 2016.)

What was interesting that when doing google search with key words like fitness restaurants in Europe, google didn't find much. In Asia I think it's quite easy to eat healthy because they use a lot of vegetables and fish but then again deep frying and using a lot of different sauces is normal. In Africa I found one, Food fitness factory. (Google 2016.)

Tripadvisor was next. I did the search with words fitness restaurant and more than 2000 reviews came out. When reading them it became obvious quite soon that most of them were saying that "not suited for fitness people" kind of comments. I found more restaurants in Europe but there is no fitness restaurant chains like in America. (Tripadvisor 2016.)

Few places stood out from what I found in Tripadvisor. In Belarus a place called Evo which is a wellness center and the restaurant is not the only service they provide. According to the Tripadvisor testimonials, the place is quite nice and a little bit more expensive.

The menu looked nice and healthy. The Fitness café in Thailand also seems up for the challenge. The menu looks nice and fresh and peoples' comments were mostly about the prices being a bit higher than normal cafes. Those were the most interesting ones I found. (Tripadvisor 2016.)

The main thing in all of these restaurants is that in 90% of them, there is more than the fitness aspect. Obviously it still is such a niche market that there is no point concentrating only in fitness. There is usually food that suits also for people who eat without no restrictions and for people who want to watch what they eat. This is quite interesting when especially the American places are said to be fitness restaurants but they are also serving food which doesn't go well with the ideal fitness diet. Many of these places use food items with good nutritional value but no place gives the possibility to weigh the food. In many places you can see the macros stated which makes counting easier. Many customers were saying in Tripadvisor that the places were a little bit over the average price range which gives us a clue that the quality raw materials cost more and probably the labor also.

From these findings can be concluded that the fitness market is very niche and that the costs in raw materials and well educated staff in this diet sector, might be too much for many entrepreneurs who'd like to start this kind of a restaurant. Also the fact that it still is a quite niche market so there is no point for a single restaurant just to concentrate on fitness only. Still this doesn't answer the question why this kind of restaurant doesn't exist in Finland. We are the country of chains so it'd be a good target for some chain for example or by combining another concept with this could work like it did for example with the Evo case or the Fitness cafe in Thailand. The big question might also be about the costs because we are one of the most expensive countries in the world.

Later in my research I found that there actually is a restaurant concept which is quite close to what fitness restaurants usually offer. This is to be found in Tampere and also in Oulu. The restaurant name is Fitwok. (Fitwok 2016.)



ETUSIVU

MEISTÄ

MENU

CATERING

OTA YHTEYTTÄ

1. Valitse Pohja

1. VAALEA RIISI

5,45 €

sekoitus tuoreita kasviksia, sekä kananmuna

2. KOKOJYVÄ RIISI

5,45 €

sekoitus tuoreita kasviksia, sekä kananmuna

3. NUUDELI

5,45 €

sekoitus tuoreita kasviksia, sekä kananmuna

4. RIISI NUUDELI

5,45 €

sekoitus tuoreita kasviksia, sekä kananmuna

5. KASVIS

5,95 €

sekoitus tuoreita kasviksia, sekä kananmuna

6. SALAATTI

5,45 €

2. Valitse Täytteet

KANA

2,75 €

HÄRKÄ

3,20 €

POSSU

2,75 €

TOFU

2,75 €

KATKARAVUT

3,20 €

JÄTTIRAVUT

4,75 €

HERKKUSIENI

1,30 €

ANANAS

1,30 €

BAMBU

1,30 €

SIPULI JA PAPRIKA

1,30 €

CASHEW PÄHKINÄ

1,60 €

RAEJUUSTO

1,20€

EXTRA KANANMUNA

1€

3. Valitse Kastike

TERIYAKI

CHILI

GREEN CURRY

TIKKA MASALA

KORMA

OSTERIKASTIKE

RED CURRY

GARLIC BLACK BEAN

Image 1. (Fitwok 2016)

In this picture you can see an example of what is offered in Fitwok. The customer chooses the base which is carbohydrates, then adds protein option and finally a sauce. One of my interviewees had tried this and told me that you can tell the chefs the gram amounts you want and they will prepare the meal according to that. They have two restaurants already in Finland, in Tampere and in Oulu and they are opening a new one in Kuopio later this year. Still we don't have one in Helsinki.

4 Helsinki restaurant scene

The restaurant scene in Helsinki has changed drastically in the past couple of years. New restaurants are opened everyday and the quality of service and food play a big role when people choose where they go out to eat.

Since we joined the European Union in 1995 our alcohol import expanded. Since then the variety in alcohol beverages has grown and still is. People were able to travel easily and that has made studying abroad easier also. Many people in the hospitality industry have either studied or worked abroad in order to get international experience. Many chefs have worked abroad and brought new ideas into our restaurants here. Good example of this is Tomi Björck who owns BW-restaurants with Matti Wikberg. Mr. Brjock has worked abroad before and brought his knowledge here and made his ideas into a successful business. Many chefs are working abroad for some time to gain knowledge and experience but also bring new ideas and flavour back here with them. (Jänkälä 2016; Eurooppa-tiedotus 2000; Oksanen 2015.)

When looking at new recently opened restaurants like OX, Finnjävel and Baskeri Basso you can see what is trendy now. People seem to be going after good value for money, simple and more individual concepts and experiences. The food and flavour plays a big part of course but the key seems to be that it's something new, different and unique.

Since 2014 the turnover in restaurant industry has declined and it still is. This is a very interesting factor when you think about how many restaurants have been established since 2014. In the industry report from this January we can see that food and culinary tourism are increasing and food will play even bigger role in peoples traveling plans. People want to experience local delicacies and new things through food. (Jänkälä 2016.)

4.1 Trends

Trends are always a hard topic because nobody can predict the future even though we'd love to try. After talking with different professionals in the restaurant industry it seems that the trends now are experiences, local food, simplicity, surprise factor, being different, good service and value for money. Also health and wellbeing are seen as big factors but wellbeing is not just about being athletic. It's part of a bigger package where good quality food plays a part. This is what Fitwok is doing and it seems it's quite popular. On Facebook they have over 2000 likes. (Fitwok 2 May 2016.) People want to enjoy without guilt and experience more than just the food. Everything around the food is important as well.

As mentioned in the previous chapter, food is going to have a bigger role in tourism and what is also increasing is the demand for individual choices and options in food. Special diets and ethical food choices are growing and our industry has to take these into consideration. (Jänkälä 2016.)

4.2 Future

The future looks very bright for Finnish restaurant scene. Especially in Helsinki new restaurants are opened weekly, people are spending more time and money when dining out. The age of laptops, ipads' and phones has unfortunately diminished peoples' social life around the dining table, which you can see especially in the metropolitan area restaurants. Taking pictures of your food or having a romantic dinner with your loved one usually involves phones. There is still hope when restaurants are putting effort on the experience and service and people usually have the patience to leave their phone and concentrate on the moment.

The current situation is looking really good if we look at the economic situation and despite of that new restaurants open their doors. This has been an interesting to see that people still eat out even though the economy is what it is.

The digitalisation and sharing economy will be growing in the future. There already has been signs about this when restaurants have been thinking about how to minimize food waste by inventing away to share good quality left over ingredients to those who could still use it. In Finland this has shown to be problematic because of legislation, possible contamination hazards and bureaucracy.

Businesses like Wolt and Foodora have been growing fast and they are making home delivery possible for different kinds of restaurants. This has increased people eating restaurant food but it hasn't diminished people eating in restaurants. This is part of the digitalisation of eating out. As mentioned earlier in the chapter about eating out and what it really means, this new delivery business is a perfect example of it. Everyday new inventions are being made to bring good quality food where ever and whenever and this is a good thing. Not only does it increase restaurants turnover but it makes restaurants more available to everybody at anytime. The challenge is on how to bring the restaurant to the customer not only with the food and how to make this as an experience. People are demanding more and our industry has to keep up with customers ever changing minds. (Kauppalehti 2016.)

5 Fitness and eating out

I chose a qualitative research method to conduct my research. I chose this because I wanted an insight on how people from fitness side experience eating out. I wanted to get a deeper look on how important the interviewees see the social aspect when eating out and does that affect their restaurant choices. This method was best suited for my thesis.

I interviewed ten people all together. Five from restaurant and five from fitness industry. I chose each one so that they represent a different age group or profession with in their field, in order to get a wider range of knowledge and people from different backgrounds. The restaurant interviewees are mostly for reference and to support my theoretical framework. In this chapter I will go shortly through my objectives, the analysis of methods that I used and also data collection, analysis of the data and finally conclude this chapter with a summary.

5.1 Objectives and research methods

The objective in this thesis is to answer these following questions: do fitness people feel there is a demand for a fitness restaurant? Would they go there? How important is the social aspect when they are eating out?

In addition I wanted to find out what does the social aspect mean to them and does their social circle have an effect on where they go out to eat? Also I wanted to find out why do they think we don't have this kind of as restaurant in Helsinki? I asked about future trends from the restaurant interviewees in order to get an idea if this kind of concept is only on its way. These questions helped me to understand the possible issues on why these types of restaurants haven't took off as I originally predicted and does the social factor drive fitness peoples dining out choices.

I chose to do a research based thesis by using qualitative method. My study is most of all a case study but there are some elements of ethnography approach. Qualitative research method is defined as follows:

-Qualitative research is designed to reveal a target audience's range of behavior and the perceptions that drive it with reference to specific topics or issues. It uses in-depth studies of small groups of people to guide and support the construction of hypotheses. The results of qualitative research are descriptive rather than predictive. (QRCA 2016.)

Qualitative approach was quite clear for me to choose already from the beginning because I knew that whatever was my subject I wanted peoples' personal experiences, feelings and knowledge to be seen in my thesis. I wanted this because this is what studying is about in a school of applied sciences, we apply knowledge from the field and the most interesting knowledge comes from peoples' experiences. The best way for me to learn is by listening and learning from others and this is what I also got to implement during this project. I chose to make a small scale study and I conducted it with semi-structured interviews in order to get more personal answers and insight on these matters. This is why my study cannot be generalized. This is only a small sampling of an interesting topic.

Case study is defined as follows: "The case study is used in many situations, to contribute to our knowledge of individual, group, organizational, social, political, and related phenomena" (Yin 2009, 4). This thesis is a specific case in a certain environment and the aim is to try to understand why Helsinki doesn't have a fitness restaurant.

Ethnography is: "Ethnographers generate understandings of culture through representation of what we call an emic perspective, or what might be described as the "insider's point of view." (Hoey 2014, 2).

The ethnography side can be seen in the fact that I am studying two groups of people but the question remains the same; do they feel this kind of restaurant could work?

These approaches worked well for me and taking in to consideration my subject they were appropriate. This was mostly a case study because I studied a group of people and a certain problem from their perspective but also there was to be seen an ethnographical approach because I was studying two different groups. I had interesting interviews with the respondents and with some we almost went out of the subject because the conversation was flowing.

5.2 The interviews

I chose my interviewees according to their profession and age. I contacted them face to face, via email, most of the fitness people through Facebook and or Instagram and some of them I knew already. Gender played a role only in the Fitness side because they were the target group of the problem and the restaurant side results I used more as a reference to conflict or support my own opinions and my theory base as well as the fitness professionals. I conducted my interviews during March, April and May of 2016.

I decided to go on with semi- structured theme interviews in order to get more personal insight on the matter as well as to see how much their ideas and opinions differ concerning this subject. This is why I didn't attach any interview questions in the appendices because they differed. I delimited my study to Helsinki area because here is the biggest supply for different restaurants and other niche businesses in Finland due to bigger population density. I made the questions after and while I was writing my theory part so I based my questions mostly on what I wanted to find out and also to support my theory base.

I came up with the first interview questions early on, while starting the theory part. I changed them according to whom I was interviewing to get more specific answers. I had 10 questions for each participant. The duration of each interview varied a lot. Some had short and to the point answers and some liked talking. The duration of the interviews varied from 10 to 30 minutes.

I recorded all interviews and transcribed them. I wanted to finish all of the interviews first and then do the analysis. Unfortunately I started my thesis during competition season for many fitness people so my last interviewee took 1 and a half month to find, which took a lot of unnecessary time. This was because nobody replied to my interview requests. Finally I got the last one so I was able to start analysing and writing the final part of my thesis.

I printed all the transcriptions so that I could mark and make notes. This made it easier for me to see the similarities and differences and analyse the answers more thoroughly.

5.3 The interview results

I founded all my fitness interviewees from Facebook and from Instagram. All the restaurant people I found through my connections or I knew them somehow from school. From fitness industry I interviewed one personal trainer, 3 people who have been competing in fitness sports and one amateur. From restaurant industry I interviewed two chefs', one restaurant manager, one product and concept manager from a major Finnish restaurant operator and lastly one teacher from Haaga-Helia.

I asked each responded 10 question. I had 3 questions that were the same for everyone. I asked each of them about their background in their own industry to make sure that their opinions have some validity based on their experiences, work background and education. The second question was: what is the most important aspect when you go out to eat? 8 people out of 10 answered, because of the company and because it is a social situation.

From the two who answered differently the other one said that he hasn't learned to eat in company because of his childhood and the other one answered from his company's perspective and not from his own. The third question was: Why do you think we don't have a proper fitness restaurant here in Finland? I found out about Fitwok during my interviews so I mentioned it each time from there on. I felt that the fitness restaurant concepts in America are more niche than Fitwok which is why I mentioned it to the interviewees in order for them to see where I was coming from with this question. All the other questions I chose according to whom I was interviewing.

Question about why they go out to eat, was the most important question in my interviews because this is one of the main topics of this thesis. The social factor is a key element even in fitness peoples' dining experiences and that is what actually surprised me because following social media platforms, you don't see that many pictures from fitness athletes dining out which gives the impression that they don't eat out that much. 4 out of 5 of them said that food is fuel for them most of the time, especially during competition season, but when they do go out to eat, they really want to enjoy and relax. That is the time when they can let loose and not worry about anything. All of them said that they do go out to eat and they really enjoy quality restaurants and quality food. When they go out they put effort on choosing the place because they want quality.

The social pressure was not to be seen on their dining out experiences but I think the social pressure can be seen in a positive way in their lifestyle. The goal is to succeed in competitions or to shape their body. One of the interviewees said that the pleasure comes from seeing the results of what you can achieve by eating healthy.

When asking all the respondents why they think we don't have a fitness restaurants the answers varied. 5 out of 10 said because we don't have enough people here so the demand isn't that big. 2 people said that the concept should be really good and probably connected to another concept or then the restaurant should have a catch which would bring people in. 2 respondents mentioned that the competition is too hard. That the restaurant world is changing fast and new ideas are coming every day. One respondent felt that restaurants are already healthier and offering good quality food so there wouldn't be a need for a restaurant like this. The respondents also answered same things but I brought out each respondents main point.

I think one of the reasons behind is also the value for money. Why would you pay for something that you can make home? This was stated also by one of the fitness interviewees. The concept and value for money would have to be good in order for a restaurant like this to operate and be profitable.

Most of the interviews went on more like a conversation and many people throughout both industries said that people are getting more aware of what suits them as individuals. People have been following food and diet trends but the trend is changing to be more about individual needs. This is something restaurants have to consider and many already do. For example one of the restaurant respondents said that their menu is totally lactose free. All of the restaurant respondents said that the supply is going to be more diverse and niche but the business idea and the concept has to work in order for the restaurant to succeed. One of them said also that restaurants are starting to go on flavour first. So whatever the concept is the quality and flavour has to be there.

In the chapter Helsinki restaurant scene these same themes can be seen. New restaurants offer more individual options and different things for consumers. The variation of restaurants is bigger than ever.

With the restaurant respondents we talked about wellness trends and other possible future trends. The main ideas that came out were that wellness is going to grow stronger. What was mentioned also in the theory base was local food and the respondents felt the same about this that it's becoming more popular and that local food is most of the time considered to be healthy as well. Cross industries the respondents said that wellbeing is more than healthy food. It is a comprehensive thing and that is why the social factor is important while eating out because it is part of mental health. Respondents from restaurant industry also mentioned that the health aspect is going to be seen growing more in the lunch side because that is daily for many people and that's where you already can see changes towards healthier.

This all would indicate that a fitness restaurant could only be on its way. The trend is still going strong towards healthier and what was mentioned in the study by Loman (2015) profession and wealth have an effect on people's eating habits. So if your profession is related to sports and or you are making good money with it, it is quite likely for you to have healthy eating habits. This doesn't mean that going out for dinner would be forbidden.

When asking few of the fitness respondents would they go to a fitness restaurant if one would be established, few of them replied yes. Those who did, said that the concept

should be on point as well as the food. If the quality or the concept would be bad it wouldn't work. The other ones answered that probably no because people want out of the fitness bubble when dining out. Lunch place would be a different thing. I asked some of the restaurant people could this kind of concept work, many said yes if the concept was attached to something. The concept was key in this case as mentioned also earlier.

This is relation to the fact that people are looking for quality and value for money as it was stated by Lintunen (2014). The concept should be planned carefully so that people would pay for what they could make at home.

Few respondents from the restaurant side said that experience is going to be the next thing and as mentioned in the theory part it probably will. The experience factor could be attached to technology or something new and interesting like food tourism as it is growing. With one of my interviewees I asked will technology bring new things in to our industry and he said that we've probably seen only a fraction of what is about to come. When establishing a new place, innovation is playing a bigger role when designing the functions inside the restaurant. The respondent from the major Finnish restaurant company talked about how their advantage is the logistics and processes. He talked about how they have restaurants where they can change the concept quite quickly

5.4 Summary

The respondents cross industries felt the same mostly about the two questions. What is the most important aspect when you go out to eat? Why do you think we don't have a proper fitness restaurants here in Finland? The social aspect is the most important part when people are eating out and this kind of restaurant could work, if it would have a good solid concept, quality food and value for money. As mentioned in the theory base the competitions is hard and my interviewees agreed on this. The selection of restaurants is wider than ever and the supply is going towards a more niche direction little by little.

The fitness people appreciate food especially when they have that time of the year when they can eat more freely, meaning off season (outside of competing season). They appreciate good, quality food and the social aspect is important and it shows even more when they go out to eat. That is their time off. One of the respondents mentioned that we have a culture here in Finland that we are used to making our own food at home, unlike in America where the take away culture and dining out are more common for everybody. This is why he felt that we wouldn't necessarily need a fitness restaurant because cooking is normal part of everybody's daily routines. That was a good point. He still said that with a good

concept it might work. The fact that we don't have many people here is also a valid factor why entrepreneurs have to be careful when thinking about new concepts for restaurants and which of them could work. Also the fact that this kind of food can be expensive and the cost structure should be considered very carefully.

I had a course on feasibility and innovation of businesses and this is where I really had to think about this idea of a fitness restaurant. My business plan was to establish a fitness restaurant and during the feedback session I got feedback on the concept that it has to be solid because this is a niche idea. The cost issues were also discussed. So these same problems that my respondents saw has been seen already in the theory base about Helsinki's restaurants and in my courses at school. Many facts support the idea that this would be a very risky business idea.

Conclude from my interviews that according to the respondents the social aspect is the most important for 8 out of 10. The social aspect can be seen in Finnish eating out culture still as an important part. In my work I see it all the time. People having date nights, birthdays, meetings and other celebrations. Food is always involved. It is a part of many special occasions and holidays. The social pressure can be seen as a positive thing in fitness lifestyle towards better choices on food and exercise. The choice of which restaurant to go to shows the importance of quality food and value for money.

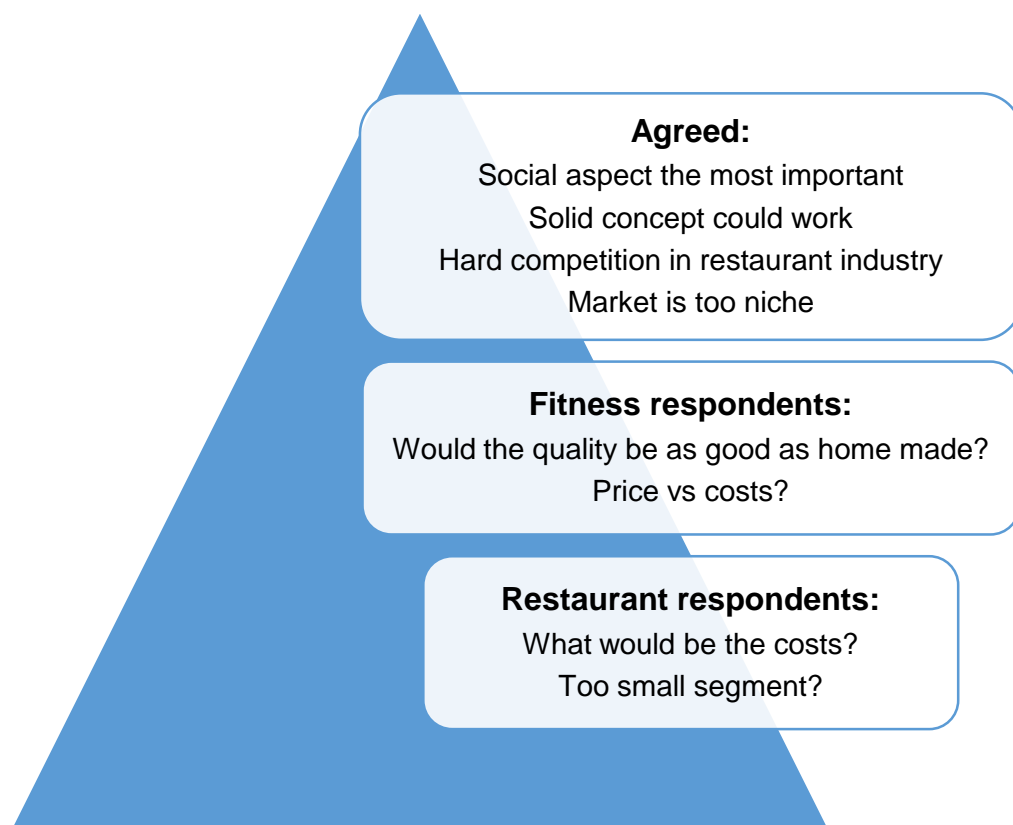


Figure 3. Main findings

The interviewees agreed on four things. They said that it would need a solid concept which should be combined with another concept in order for it to work. Social aspect is the most important part when going out to eat and that this is to be seen in restaurants by customers sharing food for example. The hard competition in restaurant market which makes it challenging to enter for all new businesses. Also everybody felt that only fitness market is too niche that there should be something else combined with the fitness concept.

Fitness interviewees were thinking about the quality of the food in the restaurant. Because it is one of the key aspects they were wondering would the quality be as good as home-made. Also what they were wondering about was that how would the restaurant deal with the cost and prices? It should be profitable but also the value for many would have to be really good in order for anybody to pay more for what they can get cheaper from the grocery store.

The restaurant respondents were also thinking about the costs. They were thinking about more from the payroll point of view because they felt that a chef like this would have to have special knowledge – which would mean more expensive labour costs. Also the raw material quality has to be really good which would also add into the costs. They were worried also about the niche market and the small segment. This is way they also felt that the concept should be a little bit more than just fitness in order for them to get a wider segment and clientel.

These interviews made me see this in a different light. I was confident that this kind of idea would work easily but I wasn't thinking about the concept in a bigger picture or the current situation in the Helsinki restaurant scene. The respondents gave me good ideas about what is going on the restaurant industry right now, in the near future and possible trends so I was going in to the right direction with my hypothesis on those themes.

According to thesis written by Ikonen and Kämppe (2014) there is a demand for a fitness restaurant, but in what way and what would the concept be like. That is something that hasn't been determined and it could be a good research subject for the future. What was stated by the interviewees from the restaurant industry was that the concept would have to be really good in order for the customers to get value and quality from something they could do at home.

6 Discussion

I started my thesis process with a simple question; why don't we have a fitness restaurant here in Finland? In the early stages I found a business plan conducted by former students and that gave me one answer, that there is a demand for a restaurant like this (Ikonen & Kämppi 2014, 54). I started wondering what are the reasons behind the fact that this kind of restaurant is missing from Helsinki?

My personal background with this subject became from my hobby. I went to the gym actively for 5 years. The first touch I got into fitness world was from Fitfarm in 2014. I participated in an online training program that included diet, work out plans and an online forum for all the participants. After this I took a personal trainer from Fitfarm for one year. I started following fitness professionals on Instagram and also the Finnish fitness competitions. I've followed Fitfarm and especially Jutta Gustafsbergs' story because it is an interesting successful business story but also the fact that she is an inspiration for me.

Last year during my exchange I started thinking about my subject and I knew it would be something about gym and food. Later that year after actively following the Finnish fitness athletes for few years I started to wonder why don't we have a fitness restaurant here? Once Christmas came I already knew that this is what I want to find out. But because there was a business plan already made I had to find another angle where I could study this subject from. I remembered seeing the fitness diary television show last year and one episode from there where Mari Valosaari is sitting in a car eating her fitness food while her friends are inside a restaurant enjoying dinner. This was because she couldn't eat her own food in the restaurant. I wondered how does it feel when your social life has to suffer because of how you eat? This is how social angle became part of my study.

The interview results surprised me because of my personal opinion that this would work, but as I did more interviews and research I learned more and I started to think about this subject more objectively. In the beginning I was sure that there would be a demand for this and that this could work but I think I felt like that partly because of my own interest towards the subject and because I wasn't thinking this from the business side of establishing a restaurant. So as my process moved forward my view point changed a lot. I noticed that the more I interviewed the more I agreed with people on the fact that this would be a challenging concept because they proved their point with good arguments.

Also what surprised me was the fact that there might not be a market place for a restaurant like this for now, but it might open up in the future. The fact that it is a really niche market and to make the concept like this which would create value and quality and still maintaining good profit levels will be challenging.

The validity and credibility of my respondents is good because all of them have been working in their industry for several years so they have experience and their backgrounds and education support their personal learning paths. As I mentioned before this study cannot be generalized because this was a small sampling but I would say that these individuals have some ground for their opinions. I interviewed people from different age groups and all of them did a different job in their field so that gives this study a wider spectre but still it cannot be generalized.

The planning of my thesis was good and I think my time management was the best I could do in these circumstances. I've had a difficult spring with many things happening at the same time. So taking all that in to consideration I did more than good. I hit a problem trying to find my last respondent. It took 1,5 months to find the last fitness interviewee and I think the Fitness Classic competition held few weeks ago, also played a part in this. I was in good time management before this problem. Finally I found my last one so I could finish my interview analysis. I wasn't expecting too much trouble but sometimes life surprises you. But I did the best I could and I'm happy I didn't give up. I could have decide to move my graduation till next fall but I decided to do this now so I didn't want to give up. So this is an accomplishment for me in itself already.

I think the interviews were really good but I could have made them better if I would've know all of my interviewees beforehand. I could have planned the interviews to match each other's in some levels but I'm happy on how they went now. Analysing the interviews was fun and nice because I was able to look back on this journey so far and reflect. The methods used were well suited for my purposes. The applicability of my work is good for my industry for us to see a possible new niche market and to see where our industry is going. This thesis also show cases trends related to my subject, like wellness and health which still are growing. Also now in the time of smart phones and social media restaurants need to maintain the social factor which can be challenging due to the fact that people spend more time on their phone. This also requires possible new innovation but as one respondents mentioned, we could use that into our advantage because we've probably seen only a fraction of what is coming.

6.1 Personal learning

I thought the theory part would be more challenging but the empirical part proved out to be more. My bad feature is poor time management but with this I did my best and even beyond. With a full time job and school I could still do this is already a victory for me.

I enjoyed this very much because this subject was really interesting. Because of my personal interest but also because the social aspect of eating out hasn't been studied much as mentioned earlier. This subject should be studied more and my suggestion is that social aspect could be studied on its own also. This could be studied from general perspective in Finland or possibly compare sociology of eating out between Finnish people and other nationalities in Finland. This could be interesting as well.

From professional perspective I developed better time management, being flexible with time tables and networking cross industries for a common interest. Cross industry study was really interesting and I learned a lot from my interviewees. I learned that I need to remember to be more objective because I can't see new and better ideas if I'm fixed on my own opinions. I am open minded but sometimes forget to look beyond of what's in front of me. I developed better skills on how to write scientific text and also how to search for reliable sources. I developed my analytic skills as well as my concentration.

This was one the hardest things I've had to do but this also taught me patience and how to make long term goals along with short term. I got to use everything I've learned during my three years and also it was nice to see that I too already was able to predict some things that might occur in the future and that people agreed with what I had predicted earlier. I learned more about a new topic sociology and that is something that could be useful for our students to learn more about in the future.

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Appendices

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